

VZCZCXRO3429  
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHCN RUEHGH RUEHLH RUEHPW RUEHVC  
DE RUEHNE #5334 3511229  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 171229Z DEC 07  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9732  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 005334

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2027  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CH](#) [IN](#)  
SUBJECT: DALAI LAMA OUTFLANKS PRC ON SUCCESSION

Classified By: Acting DCM/Ted Osius for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In response to China's State Administration of Religious Affairs' August 2007 decree declaring that tulkas (living Buddhas) must be approved by the state, the Dalai Lama announced on November 28 that he may call for a public referendum to decide the fate of the institution of the Dalai Lama before he dies. If the Tibetan people vote to continue with the institution, he signaled that he may ask Tibetans to consider the system of selection including the following options:

- continue with the present system where leading lamas will identify a successor after his death;
- the Dalai Lama will select a "living reincarnate" before his death; or
- a Vatican-style system in which a group of high lamas will designate a Dalai Lama based upon seniority.

A Tibetan government-in-exile official said that a decision to hold a referendum is not imminent, and the Dalai Lama was "thinking out loud." He conceded that it was meant to repudiate any claims by the Chinese on Tibetan religious rites and their aim to control succession of the Dalai Lama.  
END SUMMARY.

----- Dalai Lama mulls a public referendum on his institution  
-----

¶2. (C) In response to a question from the press during his visit to Amritsar's Golden Temple on November 27, the Dalai Lama expounded upon the statement he made in Japan in mid-November that he may pick his successor before he dies. Head of the Bureau of His Holiness the Dalai Lama Tempa Tsering pointed out that there is a historic precedence for

SIPDIS  
high lamas to select a living reincarnate. "In effect, some lamas have foreseen the person that can fulfill their purpose. In the case of the Dalai Lama, that would be the Tibetan peoples' return to Tibet." However, Tsering noted that the Dalai Lama is convinced that the Tibetan people should decide if they wish to continue with the institution through a referendum on the matter before selection options are considered in greater detail. The government-in-exile will seek the opinion not only of Tibetan exiles, but also from those still in Tibet, asserted Tsering. He revealed that the Dalai Lama has also considered determining successors by a selection process akin to the Vatican's system for selecting popes. "In this way, a Dalai Lama will be appointed based more or less on seniority," according to Tsering. Tsering conceded that, while the Dalai Lama has

SIPDIS

considered succession for some time, it was the recent proclamations of the Chinese government regarding the appointment and succession of lamas that prompted the Dalai Lama to speak publicly.

13. (C) Media sources reported that the Dalai Lama expounded on succession possibilities during his private visit to Milan, Italy, when he commented to the press on December 5 that his reincarnate could be a woman. "If a woman reveals herself as more useful, the lama could very well be reincarnated in this form," he said. Commenting on the Dalai Lama's latest comments, representatives from the International Campaign for Tibet estimated that he would likely introduce succession concepts slowly in order to gauge his peoples' sentiments while continuing to send the message to the Chinese government that it was ultimately the Tibetan people who will decide the issue.

WHITE